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ABSTRACT

Few colleges of education include theory and practice about the need to nurture resilient teacher leaders. This issue should be addressed in order to improve the preparation and continued development of the nation's teachers, particularly those in urban schools. This newsletter suggests that as problems confronting schools, particularly urban schools, become increasingly complex, leadership must come from those closest to students--the classroom teachers. Though the effective schools literature of the 1980s highlighted the role of the principal as the formal instructional leader, recent research indicates that principals cannot do it alone and that effective principals must work cooperatively with informal leaders, other teachers, and students to create learning communities. Two recent developments in public education have demonstrated the positive effects of teacher leaders: site-based management and professional development schools. Characteristics of resilient teachers include: increasing pro-social bonding; setting clear, consistent boundaries; teaching life skills; providing opportunities for meaningful participation; and providing caring and support. Characteristics of teacher leaders include: providing good examples of how to work with children; inspiring ideas and discourse; helping others with problems that seem insistently interlocked; providing leadership and involvement in union activities; and offering non-instructional support. (Contains 24 references.) (SM)

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Resilient Teacher Leaders for Urban Schools: Reflections for Teacher Education

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Janice H. Patterson, Assistant Professor, University of Alabama at Birmingham

What is the role that teacher educators should play in decreasing attrition among teachers? First-year teachers are 2.5 times more likely to leave the profession than veteran teachers. In urban schools, a beginning teacher has only a 50 percent chance of staying in the profession (Weiner, 1993). Teacher attrition is the largest single factor determining demand for additional teachers in the United States (Condition of Education, 1995).

I've worked with colleagues to create and implement a variety of changes to promote the commitment and longevity of teachers in urban schools: increased field experiences that begin earlier in the teacher education program, partnerships with local schools, greater emphasis on course content, etc. Positive changes have come from these efforts, but the reality is that we continue to prepare teachers for a world that we cannot anticipate. As I reflect on that world, I wonder how teacher education programs can prepare teacher leaders who will remain committed to their profession and resilient in the face of tough issues. I stress the role of teacher leaders because I believe that as the problems confronting schools, particularly urban schools, become increasingly complex, leadership must come from those closest to students—the classroom teachers. Recent research is convincing that principals cannot do it alone.

Resilient teacher leaders can contribute to increased student achievement and promote learning for themselves and their colleagues. No matter what crisis may descend, these teacher leaders find a way to bounce back, remain focused on what they care about, and contribute to the resilience of others. One teacher leader put it this way:

"I guess I've always had my own definition of teacher leader. To me, it means that I demonstrate high energy and enthusiasm for helping others learn. I want students and the other teachers to know that I love what I do [teaching], that I value the efforts of other people who do it too. We have some tough issues here, but I refuse to fail. I've also learned that if I refuse to fail, then other people, students and teachers, seem to try harder too."

The influence of such a resilient teacher leader can be a significant one, particularly in schools that face chronic adversity. As an attempt to nurture resilient teacher leaders, the University of Alabama at Birmingham offers a course on resilience. The course, Resilience in Education, is designed to provide practical information for preservice and inservice teachers. More specifically, the goals are

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to: 1) deepen understanding of resilience through reading, self-reflection, critical discussion, and practical research; 2) identify strategies in the home and community that strengthen the resilience of children; 3) identify schoolwide strategies that create resilience for teachers and students; and 4) formulate a process for integrating resilience education in the classroom. The final project requires students to create a specific plan for developing a resilient classroom. What is the role of teacher leaders? How can teacher leaders contribute to developing a resilient school culture for students and teachers?

Role of Teacher Leaders

The effective schools literature of the 1980s highlighted the role of the principal as the formal instructional leader. The assumption was that if the principal directed the work of teachers, held high expectations, and aligned the curriculum, then teachers would work cooperatively and the school would be effective. In the 1990s, the paradigm shifted to one in which the effective principal worked cooperatively with informal leaders, other teachers, and students to create learning communities to enhance teacher and student learning. The distinction between paternal, top-down, hierarchical decision making and shared decision making is critical to understanding the importance of teacher leaders. Ann Lieberman, a renowned scholar on teacher behavior, put it this way: "Teacher participation in leadership may be the most critical component of the entire process of change" (Lieberman, 1992).

Wasley (1991) defined teacher leadership as "the ability to encourage colleagues to change, to do things they wouldn't ordinarily consider without the influence of the leader" (p. 170). Researchers have reported that teachers consider the best way to influence their professional practice is to spend time learning from and working with colleagues (Wasley, 1991); other research indicates that collegial interactions are key to building the collaborative culture associated with school improvement (Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1991). Teachers operating as leaders occupy various roles, including head teachers, department chairs, mentor teachers, team leaders, grade level chairs, staff development trainers, curriculum developers, and designers of new assessment processes, to name only a few. Others, teacher leaders without such titles, sometimes offer workshops to their peers and act as "peer coaches" (Harlin, 2000) to support other teachers' professional growth.

In particular, two recent developments in public education have demonstrated the positive effects of teacher leaders: site-based management and professional development schools. The success of site-based management frequently depends upon the extent to which teachers are involved in budgeting, setting curricular goals, setting standards for student learning, solving problems, and reaching consensus with their colleagues (Patterson, 1993). There is growing recognition that successful administrators share with teachers the decision-making and leadership responsibilities that, heretofore, were the province of the principal and district office (Harlin & Murray, 2000).

Similarly, the rise of professional development schools in the 1980s created opportunities for teachers to assume a variety of leadership positions. The most successful professional development schools targeted the simultaneous renewal of teacher education and classroom practice, with teacher leaders and university faculty at the center. Teachers assumed roles as mentors for university students and faculty, taught university courses, served actively in (and sometimes led) school improvement efforts, and engaged in action research that investigated all aspects of teaching and learning. As noted by Abdal-Haqq (1998), the literature indicates that PDS teachers report more willingness to take instructional risks and experiment with new content and pedagogy; being intellectually stimulated and energized by exposure to new ideas led to improvement in classroom practice and a greater feeling of professionalism.

In a study of over 1,200 elementary schools, Rosenholtz (1991) reported data that revealed perceptions of teacher leaders among their peers. Noting that even the strongest instructionally cogent principal cannot stand alone, teacher leaders were perceived as key to the school's success in achieving instructional goals for students. What did these teacher leaders do that their colleagues found helpful?

First, these teacher leaders revealed to others new ways of doing things. They modeled new instructional strategies. They freely shared their

knowledge with others. They initiated new programs. They made instructional decisions based on what is best for children. Second, these teacher leaders in collaborative settings

> suggested and inspired ideas and discourse, drawing others upward to higher places. They were perceived as enthusiastic, more professional, more interested than other teachers in furthering their education and in new learning. They demonstrated a positive regard for their colleagues and a belief in students and their ability to learn. (Rosenholtz, 1991, pp. 64-65)

Finally, these teacher leaders "helped others with problems that seemed insistently interlocked" (Rosenholtz, 1991, p. 66). They attacked problems and found ways to resolve them, often by new learning. Teacher leaders in collaborative settings appear to thrive on new learning and push the pedagogical bar to a higher level.

This perception of teacher leadership fits with current thinking on organizational resilience. Anderson (1994) indicated the importance of such processes as "visioning, goals, [developing] capacity of the organization to learn, reflection in practice, internal alignment, commitment or organizational integrity" (p. 142). Resilient teacher leaders can foster resilience by demonstrating and encouraging the use of organizational energy productively to achieve goals in the face of adverse conditions (Patterson & Patterson, 2001, p. 50).

As is true for anyone dealing with social, economic, and educational problems, teachers and teacher leaders in urban environments face difficult challenges. Consider the life of an urban teacher leader who may encounter violence in the school, teacher burnout, inadequate resources, limited instructional time, lack of community and parental support, low expectations for students and teachers, many students with high needs, frequent turnover of school administrators, and lack of professional development.

One example comes from a recent conversation with a teacher leader in an urban middle school, who said:

> "I've been in this school almost 30 years and I've seen dramatic changes. I was here when the school was integrated and had the son of the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan and the first black children in the same classroom. We couldn't exchange gifts in the classroom at Christmas because the whites didn't want to chance that their children would be giving a black child a gift. Now, it's a little different except that we get a lot of bad press here, sometimes because our students are killed. We had one of our real popular students killed in a drive-by shooting next to the school and they had to bring in counselors to talk to the kids and teachers. It took us a long time to get over that one. Most of the time we try to ignore things when they happen and keep focused on academics, but that time the kids and teachers were just too upset."

Another layer of adversity involves the constant demand for teacher change initiated by the many waves of educational reform and the concurrent call for teacher change in urban environments (Patterson & Patterson, 2001). Teachers may be exhausted and cynical, and that affects how reforms are implemented. They may either withdraw and not care, or they may work harder, sometimes mechanically and to the point of depletion. Or they may simply ride it out and do nothing.

Teacher leaders who instruct as well as inspire can have a powerful impact on school resilience. Benard (1992) documented the importance of the educational environment in the lives of students facing multiple problems. Students who succeed often do so "because of the presence of environmental support in the form of one family member, one teacher, one school, one community person that encouraged their success and welcomed their participation" (pp. 18-19).

Resilience and Teacher Leaders

An examination of the work of Henderson and Milstein (1996) revealed specific characteristics that they believe profile the resilient educator and have particularly important implications for teacher leaders in urban environments. An examination of this work suggests a relationship between characteristics of successful teacher leaders and resilient educators in the ways they influence school culture. See Table 1 for a depiction of the similarities in the Rosenholtz (1991) study on teacher leaders and the resilience work of Henderson and Milstein (1996).

The elements (Henderson & Milstein, 1996) outlined above are important aspects of teacher leaders' resilience and are developed more fully in the sections that follow.

Research on resilience clearly states the importance of a supportive environment (Benard, 1992). Teacher leaders are uniquely positioned within schools to work with administrators and colleagues to create a school culture that supports teachers during times of chronic adversity.

Increase bonding. Increased bonding among colleagues is a necessary prerequisite for organizational change. Teacher leaders are particularly situated to create an environment that fosters caring relationships and the opportunities to interact with others through formal and informal mechanisms. Cooperative efforts created by teacher leaders foster increased collegial interaction as reported by Hayes, Grippe, and Hall (1999) in their study of building resource teachers.

Formally, teacher leaders can encourage bonding in their schools to increase or support resilience (Henderson & Milstein, 1996). Working with the principal and other teachers, the workday can be structured to promote opportunities for meaningful interaction among colleagues (Fullan, 1994). In some professional development sites, university students are trained as substitutes so that teachers can be released for classroom duties for professional development and bonding with their peers. Formally and informally, teacher leaders can bolster interpersonal interactions, such as mentoring and small-group efforts that promote educators' sense of belonging (Henderson & Milstein, 1996).

A principal in an urban school described the work of a teacher leader who developed a mentoring program for new teachers in the elementary school:

"My first year as principal I was pretty strung out getting ready for school to start. I was especially worried because I didn't know how I could help the new teachers. There was so many that year, about 20 percent of the staff were beginners. She [the teacher leader] came to me the first week of school and said that she had an idea about creating a mentor program for the new teachers. Rather than just encouraging the new people to find a mentor, she wanted to assign some of our veterans to act as mentors. She'd even made a list of the things she wanted the mentors to do ASAP. I told her to go ahead, and by the end of that week every new teacher had a mentor who helped them get the year started right with students, how to do the register, and lots of other things. The new teachers later told me that it was one of the best things that happened that year. And we only had one new teacher leave that year, because her husband got transferred. That's pretty good for a school like this one."

Set clear, consistent boundaries. Wasley (1991) has reported on the importance of teacher leaders defining clear, consistent boundaries in terms of roles and responsibilities. Evidence of the need for clear, consistent responsibilities comes from the U.S. Department of Education's *Condition of Education* report (1998, p. 122), which noted differences in the perceptions of principals and teachers relative to teacher influence over school and classroom decisions. Approximately 75 percent of elementary school principals and 41 percent of teachers felt that teachers had influence in setting discipline policy within the school. Over 70 percent of elementary school principals and 33 percent of elementary school teachers reported that teachers had influence in determining the content of inservice programs. Perhaps most important, 60 percent of principals reported teacher involvement in establishing curriculum, whereas only 32 percent of teachers believed they had that influence. Yet, educational researchers and policymakers converge around the knowledge that schools and classrooms may be positively or negatively affected by the extent to which teachers participate in decisions about school policies and issues, and by the autonomy that teachers have in classrooms (Condition of Education, 1998, p. 122).

Research has documented that when educators are involved in setting boundaries and policies they must implement, they are more likely to support their implementation and deepen their resilience in dealing with change (McLaughlin, Talbert, & Bascia, 1990). Teacher leaders can also work with school staff to develop a meaningful vision and mission that will establish a connection to a larger purpose (e.g., Rosenholtz, 1991), a critical element of organizational resilience (Anderson, 1994). A teacher involved in creating goals and objectives for a professional development site put it this way (Christensen et al., 1999): "All participants collabo-

Resilient Educator and Teacher Leader Characteristics

Resilient educator characteristics[1]	Teacher leader characteristics[2]
Increased prosocial bonding. • Seeks regular opportunities to interact with others • Is able to interact easily with others, regardless of status differences • Engages in cooperative efforts	***Provided good examples on how to work with children.*** • Willing to try new things • Share knowledge • Initiate new programs • Receptive to suggestions • Active • Eager to volunteer • Put child's welfare first
Taught "life skills." • Participates in meaningful professional development • Has high self-esteem that is supported by adult learning opportunities • Gives help to and receives help from other educators	***Inspired ideas and discourse, drawing others to higher places.*** • Enthusiasm • Risk taker • Initiating • Professional • Willing to change • Positive outlook • Respect for colleagues and belief in their abilities • Respect for students, belief in their abilities
Set and communicated high expectations. • Shows confidence in oneself's and others' potential for excellence • Feels that role efforts are appreciated • Feels protected by leaders to perform job expectations	***Helped others with problems that seemed insistently interlocked.*** • Experienced • Knowledgeable • Willing to help others • Well trained • High goals • Empathetic
Provided opportunities for meaningful participation. Set clear, consistent boundaries. • Values site-based management as a way of ensuring teacher input in decision making • Takes the time and gains the skills needed to participate effectively • Knows what's going on and joins in celebrations of schoolwide successes • Understands and accepts policies and rules • Involved in developing and changing policies and rules	***Provided leadership and involvement in union activities.*** • Active in the union • Goes to meetings • Share information • Outspoken • Direct in approach • Experience
Provided caring and support. • Has a sense of belonging through messages of appreciation and support • Thinks that community supports educators' activities	***Offered noninstructional support.*** • Empathetic mothering • Understand colleagues' problems • Sympathetic, kind, soothing • Listener

[1]Adapted from Henderson, N., & Milstein, M. M. (1996). *Resiliency in schools: Making it happen for students and educators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

[2]Adapted from Rosenholtz, S. (1991). *Teacher's workplace: The social organization of schools.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Table 1

rated in creating a vision statement and supporting goals that made it clear we are partners, working together to achieve our vision."

Teach life skills. Teacher leaders must create professional development opportunities with their colleagues that foster resilience. One example comes from Douglas County, Colorado, where teacher leaders mentor and coach new teachers, support curriculum implementation in all disciplines, plan and implement ways to build staff development, and provide resources and support for gifted and talented programming (Hayes, Grippe, & Hall, 1999). In a study of 87 teachers, Wasley (1991) reported that interviewees indicated they needed professional development in leadership training, more knowledge in budgeting and finance, school law, multicultural education, current educational research, change processes, and participatory decision making.

In a separate study, Lieberman, Saxl, and Miles (1988) studied 17 teacher leaders in the New York system. Because the work of a teacher leader was different than that of a classroom instructor, teacher leaders reported they also need professional development in areas like skills in trust and rapport building, organizational diagnosis, dealing with processes, managing the work, and building skill and confidence in others. Fullan (1994) analyzed teacher leadership and determined that six interrelated domains of commitment and knowledge are key to teacher success: 1) knowledge of teaching and learning, 2) knowledge of collegiality, 3) knowledge of educational contexts, 4) knowledge through continuous learning, 5) knowledge of the change process, and 6) moral purpose.

The needs identified by these researchers are similar to those reported in other studies (e.g., Moller, 1999). It is clear that the usual skills that may be important in getting a teacher into an urban setting may not be the same skills needed for success as a teacher leader. Teacher leaders contribute to teacher success by increasing resilience with their peers through planning, developing, and implementing professional development activities that allow others to build life skills.

The literature on organizational change points to the need for skillful professionals who know how to form coalitions, develop consensus, and solve problems (Hall, 1992). The research is also clear about the importance of professionals who stay in the school day after day and who can effectively answer the "how to do it" questions typical of early implementation of change initiatives. In most cases, it is better if those who conceive the innovation allow others to lead it (Hayes, Grippe, & Hall, 1999, p. 18).

Provide caring and support. In a study of essential elements for success of teachers, Little (1988) indicated the importance of support within the professional context. More recently, Moller (1999) reported on interviews with teacher leaders: "It is imperative that I receive the support of my principal and that of district staff . . . providing me with the necessary tools and resources, providing adequate time, arranging for further training and keeping me abreast of any changes" (p. 15).

Rosenholtz (1991, p. 68) identified "empathetic mothering" as one aspect of successful teacher leaders. Teachers reported that effective teacher leaders were listeners for professional and personal troubles. They provide emotional support; they're sympathetic and kind. Teacher leaders are generally experienced teachers who, in sharing their knowledge and offering affective support, promote resilience among staff.

Teachers in urban schools are seldom rewarded financially for engaging in school reform and remaining committed to teaching. Teachers report that the salient rewards come intrinsically, through relationships with colleagues and from performing a service for humanity. Henderson and Milstein (1996) suggested that caring and support are vital to resilient schools. Teacher leaders promoting resilience look for a variety of ways to honor and recognize teacher accomplishments in meaningful ways. Informal, frequent, consistent, and reality-based messages of support are important (op cit., p. 42).

Meaningful participation. School staff members become more resilient when they are given opportunities to use their talents in meaningful work. Site-based management has helped spur the growth of resilient schools, as teacher leaders and their colleagues take on decision-making authority for scheduling, budgeting, and the use of other resources. Perhaps the best examples occur when teachers receive additional training in these new areas of responsibility. Lambert (1998) identified key variables that are indicators for teacher leaders

intent on building leadership capacity: broad-based participation in leadership activities, inquiry-based use of information to inform shared decisions and practice, rules and responsibilities that reflect broad involvement and collaboration, and innovation.

Henderson and Milstein (1996) argued for key elements in building meaningful participation in resilient schools. In concert with the work noted above, roles could be expanded to include not only classroom responsibilities, but also other, organization-wide duties. These responsibilities should be meaningful to the teacher, not administrative tasks that could cause teachers to feel used. Second, time must be found for teacher leaders and their colleagues to plan and discuss issues related to teaching and learning or other topics that are significant to staff (Moller, 1999). Meaningful, shared experiences promote resilience at the school level. It is also important to note that teachers prefer participation in schoolwide activities to not interfere with their primary role of teaching.

Conclusion

The dominance of the pathological model used in earlier eras to support urban education has failed teachers and students. Beginning as early as the 1960s, we focused on the deficit model of schooling in inner cities, in which teachers and students were perceived as victims of their environment. Even the names of some of the "compensatory" programs, like "Follow Through," implied deficits in children, their homes, or schools.

Current interdisciplinary thinking has shifted to one of resilience, in which we learn from the survival of schools and other institutions that thrive in spite of adversity. The resilience model proposed here suggests that given proper environmental supports of increased prosocial bonding, clear consistent boundaries, the teaching of "life skills," caring and support, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation, teacher leaders can be effective advocates for resilience in urban schools. Yet, few colleges of education include theory and practice about the need to nurture resilient teacher leaders. It is a need we must address if we are to improve the preparation and continued development of the nation's teachers, particularly those in urban schools.

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Articles may describe best practices for professional education courses, field work, mentoring, action research, school-university partnerships, etc.

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